

After the Test Ban

The US Must Take the Initiative in Europe

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by Zbigniew Brzezinski

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There are two significant questions to ask about the test ban: why did the USSR suddenly agree to it, and what ought to be the US response in the months ahead. The answers to these questions, as I will try to show, are first that Khrushchev and his colleagues have decided that their policies of the past six years have failed, and second that if the US is to benefit from this turn of events, it must now make a major new effort to reunify Europe. Failure to make such an effort could cause the American position in Europe to be challenged on two fronts: by new Soviet overtures to Western Europe and by Gaullist overtures to the USSR. Both developments would capitalize on Western European (particularly German) frustration with the status quo.

Khrushchev's acceptance of an "atmosphere-only" test ban strongly suggests a major Soviet reassessment of the world situation and an implicit acknowledgement that Soviet policies of the last few years have failed. The Soviet leaders have evidently concluded that the general world situation is again in a "quiescent" stage. Instead of dissipating Soviet resources in useless revolutionary efforts, or missile adventures of the Cuban variety, they will probably concentrate on consolidating their present position.

What produced this reappraisal in Moscow? Six years ago the Soviet leaders were extremely confident that the Soviet economy would continue to grow rapidly, and that Soviet society would be increasingly free of internal contradictions. With the emergence of the post-bourgeois, post-1917 generation, the oppressive Stalinist system seemed an anachronism. The Communist Party could henceforth rule benevolently, taking advantage of the greater spontaneous creativity of people reared under socialism.

Their hopes have not been fulfilled. Economic growth has not been as rapid as expected. Agriculture has remained underproductive. The standard of living has not risen in recent years, and has even declined in some respects because of major increases in food prices.

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More important still, the hope of internal harmony has not materialized. The intellectuals and even the youth have proven unwilling to accept the doctrinaire rule of the Party. Many ethnic minorities have shown increasing rather than diminishing awareness of a non-Russian identity, and there has been mounting resentment against Moscow control. So the Party has had to involve itself more and more directly in the management of things and people, and this inevitably produces still more tensions. Furthermore, the Soviet leadership has been both irritated and embarrassed by recent Chinese charges that internal developments in the USSR are not orthodox Marxism-Leninism. The Soviet leaders' uncertain and ambivalent attitude toward recalcitrant intellectuals reflects their inability to come to grips with these doctrinal problems. Unwilling or unable to recognize that contradictions have persisted within a "socialist" society, the leaders naturally cannot formulate an effective policy for dealing with these contradictions, of which obstreperous intellectuals and youth are only one example.

The USSR has also had troubles abroad. With respect to the Communist bloc, the Soviet leaders have realized since 1952 that the rigid Stalinist system, requiring monolithic unity and uniformity, is no longer practicable. The diversity of national settings clearly requires greater institutional diversity. This should in theory be offset by closer economic cooperation and by ideological unity.

Here again, hopes have been disappointed. The Sino-Soviet dispute has gradually escalated from a strategic disagreement to an ideological schism. This increasingly bitter national conflict has moreover, set a precedent elsewhere in the bloc. Albanian defiance and Rumanian economic dissatisfaction portend further erosion of the Soviet position. In Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia some members of the Communist Party are bitterly dissatisfied with Soviet policies. The same is by and large true of the East German Party. The bloc is increasingly characterized by confusion and disarray. Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria maintain a status quo position in international affairs and favor Khrushchev's position. North Vietnam, North Korea (and, one may suspect, East Germany) want to alter the status quo and are apparently sympathetic to the Chinese. At

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